



**King County Mental Health Chemical Abuse and Dependency Services Division
2006 Briefing Paper**

Substance Abuse Treatment Funding for Non-Medicaid Clients

BACKGROUND:

The increase in treatment funding passed by the Legislature during the 2005 session significantly reduced the treatment gap in King County for the Medicaid eligible population. These funds were secured as a result of demonstrating the need and identifying the resulting cost savings associated with providing substance abuse services. While funding for Medicaid clients is critical, it does not provide equal access to treatment for the non-Medicaid population in King County. There are significant numbers of individuals needing assistance who are not Medicaid eligible and who simply can not afford substance abuse treatment.

ISSUES/CHALLENGES:

Waiting lists for Medicaid clients to receive substance abuse services are currently nonexistent as a result of additional treatment funds allocated during the 2005 Legislative session. Waiting lists for non-Medicaid, low income clients are the norm and continue to grow. Inability to qualify for Medicaid should not preclude low income residents of King County from accessing chemical dependency services.

DATA:

Evidence is clear that funding treatment saves money. Every \$1 spent on providing treatment services generates \$7 in monetary benefits for society, according to a new study from researchers at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA).

RECOMMENDATION/LEGISLATIVE ACTION:

Increase the state allocation for non-Medicaid substance abuse treatment funding. Providing funding for non-Medicaid substance abuse treatment will result in the same cost offsets identified in providing funding for services to the Medicaid population.